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AUTHOR	Klass, Steve
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ABSTRACT

How have "monsters" been viewed in society, what purpose do they serve, and why are they necessary? In this language-arts-based curriculum unit for grades 9-12, students explore the ways "monsters" are depicted in literature, music, and drama. According to the unit, students will: define what a monster is; read the classic "Beowulf"; then read John Gardner's "Grendel"; and execute a concluding project which requires them to create, name, describe, and visually depict a "monster." The lesson presents an overview; suggests grade level; cites subjects and subtopics; lists equipment and materials needed; and gives teacher resources and extensive National Standards for Arts Education as well as other national standards and Virginia State Standards. It provides instructional objectives and strategies, followed by a detailed, step-by-step instructional plan for the classroom. It also suggests assessment and extension activities. (NKA)

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Curricula, Lessons and Activities

Curriculum Unit Detail

Monsters

In this language arts-based curriculum unit, 9-12 grade students explore the ways "monsters" are depicted in literature, music and drama. How have monsters been viewed in society, what purpose do they serve, why are they necessary? Students will define what a monster is, then they will read the story "Beowulf," followed by "Grendel" by John Gardner. A concluding project requires students to create, name, describe and visually depict a "monster."

The following lessons are part of this unit:

- Monsters

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Curricula, Lessons and Activities

Monsters
(Part of Curriculum Unit Monsters)

Resource Type: lesson

Length:

Grade: 9,10,11,12

Subjects: Language Arts, Performing Arts, Visual Arts

Subtopics: Drawing, English, Folk Arts, Literature, Music, Painting, Photography, Technology

Overview: This lesson is intended to have students investigate the idea of "monsters" in society. How have monsters been viewed, what purpose do they serve, why are they necessary? They will begin by defining the idea of what a monster is. They will then read "Beowulf." The reading of "Grendel" by John Gardner will follow. Students will design and present their own conceptions of a monster.

Equipment:

- Computer: Mac or PC with Internet connection (optional)
- Projector: Overhead Projector
- VCR

Media & Materials:

- Book: Copies of the story of Beowulf
- Book: Copies of "Grendel," by Gardener,
- Recording: In the Hall of the Mountain King (Edvard Grieg),
- Recording: Peter and the Wolf (Piotr Tchaikovsky),

- Recording: Dance Macabre (Camille Saint-Saens),

Printouts: This lesson has printouts. They are referenced in the "Student Supplies" or "Other Materials" sections below.

Student Supplies:

Other Materials: Perhaps some visuals of Gargoyles for demonstration or display.

Related Textbooks:

Teacher Internet Resources:

Lesson and Extension Specific Resources:

- **A Love of Monsters: Gargoyles and Architectural Details in New York City**
  http://aardvarkelectric.com/gargoyle/

  This site is a wondrous tour of the gargoyles and other creatures lurking on the buildings of New York City. Creator Amelia Wilson shares with us her eye for detail on a "virtual stroll" through areas of the city.

- **National Geographic's "Search for Monsters of Mystery"**
  http://www.nationalgeographic.com/world/9903/monsters/map.html

  This site maps out the "home" territories of six legendary monsters. To find out about a creature, just click on its picture.

- **Resources for the Study of Beowulf**
  http://www.library.unr.edu/subjects/guides/beowulf.html

  This Web site was assembled for participants of the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar on Beowulf and the Heroic Age. It is a comprehensive resource guide on Beowulf and provides great detail and links for teachers.

General Internet Resources:

- **Teachers & Writers Collaborative**

http://www.twc.org/

This nonprofit organization was founded in 1967 by a group of writers and educators who believed that writers could make a unique contribution to the teaching of writing.

National Standards for Arts Education:

- 5-8 Visual Art Content Standard 1 : Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
- 5-8 Visual Art Content Standard 2 : Using knowledge of structures and functions
- 5-8 Visual Art Content Standard 3 : Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
- 5-8 Visual Art Content Standard 4 : Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
- 5-8 Visual Art Content Standard 5 : Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others
- 5-8 Visual Art Content Standard 6 : Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines
- 9-12 Music Content Standard 8 : Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
- 9-12 Visual Art Content Standard 1 : Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
- 9-12 Visual Art Content Standard 2 : Using knowledge of structures and functions
- 9-12 Visual Art Content Standard 3 : Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
- 9-12 Visual Art Content Standard 4 : Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
- 9-12 Visual Art Content Standard 5 : Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others
- 9-12 Visual Art Content Standard 6 : Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

Click here for additional information on the National Standards for Arts Education

Other National Standards:

- Language Arts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8

Source of Standards: McRel

For more on the Standards in other subjects, please refer to the Mid-continent Regional Education Laboratory (McREL) website.

State Standards, **Virginia State Standards from:edsearch.pbs.org**

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if any:

Read/Lit 10.3.1
The student will read and critique literary works from a variety of eras in a variety of cultures. · Explain similarities and differences of structures and images as represented in the literature of different cultures.

Read/Lit 10.3.2
The student will read and critique literary works from a variety of eras in a variety of cultures. · Identify universal themes prevalent in the literature of all cultures.

Read/Lit 10.3.3
The student will read and critique literary works from a variety of eras in a variety of cultures. · Describe cultural archetypes in short stories, novels, poems, and plays across several cultures.

Read/Lit10.3.4
The student will read and critique literary works from a variety of eras in a variety of cultures. · Examine a literary selection from several critical perspectives.

Writ 10.7.1
The student will develop a variety of writings with an emphasis on exposition. · Plan and organize ideas for writing.

Writ 10.7.2
The student will develop a variety of writings with an emphasis on exposition. · Elaborate ideas clearly through word choice and vivid description.

Writ 10.7.3
The student will develop a variety of writings with an emphasis on exposition. · Write clear, varied sentences.

Writ 10.7.4
The student will develop a variety of writings with an emphasis on exposition. · Organize ideas into a logical sequence.

Writ 10.7.5
The student will develop a variety of writings with an emphasis on exposition. · Revise writing for clarity and content of presentation.

Writ 10.7.6
The student will develop a variety of writings with an emphasis on exposition. · Edit final copies for correct use of language, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Writ 10.7.7
The student will develop a variety of writings with an emphasis on exposition. · Use

available technology.

Rsrch 10.10.3
The student will collect, evaluate, and organize information. · Use available technology.

To search the State Arts Standards, please visit the National Conference of State Legislatures website.

Instructional Objectives: Students will:

1. read and discuss "Beowulf."
2. read and discuss "Grendel," by John Gardner.
3. demonstrate an understanding of the concept of a monster by creating and presenting (with a visual) a monster of their own conception.
4. write a brief, concise story about his/her monster and how it came to be.
5. find an Internet site that relates to monsters and report about it to the class.

Strategies: Teacher-directed instruction
Individual practice
Demonstration
Oral presentations
Creative writing tasks
Technology integration

Instructional Plan: 1. Music can serve as an excellent way to catch students' attention. As a starting point, play "The Monster Mash" or Toccata and Fugue in D Minor by J.S. Bach, or other "spooky" pieces, and then ask the students what the inspiration for this music might have been. Do they know other examples of music that seem to be inspired by a fear of monsters or that attempt to instill a sense of monsters approaching? (Examples include Edvard Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King," Camille Saint-Saens' "Dance Macabre," and the soundtrack from horror movies such as "The Shining" and "Alien.")

2. After asking students for examples, discuss monsters. Begin with a discussion of the idea of monsters. Why do you think monsters exist? Can you give examples of monsters from your childhood? Can you give examples of the way we see monsters in our society? What are the positive aspects of monsters? What need would monsters fill in society then and now?

3. Play a segment of Piotr Tchaikovsky's "Peter and the Wolf." Discuss how the composer viewed the wolf and how he portrayed that musically. It may be appropriate to mention fairy tales here, and to discuss some of the "monster-like" characters that inhabit them. Then move to a discussion about the fact that Beowulf, one of our earliest written pieces of literature, is a monster story.

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4. Dependent upon computer lab availability, the class adjourns to the lab at this point to search the Internet for monster web sites. Each student finds a site that deals with monsters and prepares to report to the class about it. (See Internet resources for suggestions.)

5. The class will read "Beowulf." Read part of this story aloud and ask questions throughout the reading process to make sure the students are grasping the tale.

6. Quizzes are needed here to check for understanding. Following discussion at the end of "Beowulf," the class goes right into the reading of "Grendel," by Gardner.

7. Read "Grendel," following a similar scheme of quizzes and discussion.

8. During the first stage of reading "Grendel," assign the "Monster" creation project. Each student is to create a monster of his/her own. The monster should have a background, name, and history or developmental tale that explains its existence. There must be a visual accompanying the story. It is not acceptable to have an invisible monster. If the monster is generally invisible the student must figure out a way to make it visible to us for the presentation. Music may be used in the presentation, as may videotape. A computer may also be used if needed. The story of the monster must be written and turned in when the project is presented.

9. Explain to the class that, even today, there are many cultures that believe in the existence of monsters, demons, and other such creatures. Point out that, while most of us consider the notion of their existence unlikely, belief in monsters is not necessarily an unreasonable belief, and that it is, at very least, supported culturally, albeit not scientifically. Hold a vote by secret ballot on the following question: Yes or No--Do monsters exist? Use the results of the vote to engage the students in a lively discussion. then either as a part of the lesson curricula or for extra credit, have students choose either the Yes or the No position and write an essay defending his/her contention.

Instructions for online **Toccata: if you are using this link instead of a recording, please make sure you have an mp3-capable media player, like RealPlayer 8. Then click on this link:

thewww.fortunecity.com/victorian/poetry/1157/mp3/Toccata_and_Fugue_in_D_Mino.mp3?

to download. Be sure to download the mp3 file prior to the lesson.

Assessment:

Assessment will take a number of forms during this unit:

1. Quizzes on the reading materials are needed. Reading quizzes are recommended, simply to make sure the works are read.
2. Oral participation during discussion is noted.
3. A brief paper is to be written comparing and contrasting the two works ("Beowulf"

and "Grendel") and the relationship between the two. Two concise pages, well-written pages would be reasonable for this essay.

4. A brief report is to be written describing the Internet monster site and discussing how it relates to our study.
5. The monster itself is presented in an oral presentation. Grades should be based on completeness of presentation, and then to a somewhat lesser degree ont he creativity and imaginativeness of the monster. Is the visual appropriate? Does the story make sense? Has clear effort been reflected?

PRODUCTS FROM THE LESSON:

This has become an assignment that students revel in. The monsters the students create are always unusual and sometimes marvelously artistic. The stories represent thoughtful ideas and most are complete. An example: a monster created this past year by a female student this year consisted of a grid on a box which looked like a grill from the bottom of a swimming pool. There were hands reaching out of it and red diode eyes. The student told the story of being pushed into a swimming pool at the age of six, before she could swim! As she went down through the water, she imagined there were hands grabbing at her from the pool drain, pulling her in! Despite membership on the school swim team and a well-developed swimming ability, she continues to be plagued by this "Drain-Monster." She cannot go near a drain in a pool without being frightened. Each year, I also make a monster of my own, and I share this with the students when I introduce the assignment. It serves as a model, and it shows them that one need not be a special, talented artist in order to do the artwork. It gives them a model to think about as they get down to planning.

Extensions: Partner site Edsitement has a related lesson plan titled Tales of the Supernatural, which explores the role of monsters in 18th and 19th century literature.

Teacher References:

"Monster Mash" links

"Beowulf" Links
A comprehensive list of sites related to the story of Beowulf

Electronic Beowulf Project Resources for Studying Beowulf

Beowulf Student Work

Author : Steve Klass
George C. Marshall HS
Falls Church VA

Review

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